

INDIAN BABY BRIDES.

How Children Become Wives in the Land of the Hindoos.

STRANGE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Among a People Where Love and Courtship Are Absolutely Unknown.

WIDOWHOOD WORSE THAN SLAVERY

CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DISPATCH.

BOMBAY, INDIA, June 7, 1889.

The wedding season in India is now at its height. I have seen wedding processions by the dozen in every town that I have visited, and I have had a fair chance to note some of the peculiarities of Hindu marriages. India has the youngest brides and grooms in the world. The grooms I have seen have in no case been over 15, and some of the brides were apparently only just weaned. By the Hindu law a woman should be married before she reaches the age of 12. Most girls are betrothed before they are 6, and in a wedding procession at Agra I saw a little bridegroom of perhaps 10 years gorgeously

dressed in cloth of gold and with heavy gold bracelets on his wrists and ankles, sitting in a wedding chair with a little baby girl of not over 2, who lay asleep at the other end of the chair while the procession moved onward. Her sleep was heavy, and she had probably been drugged with opium.

This was a marriage of two wealthy families, and the wedding procession was very grand. At the head of it were two camels with trappings of gold ridden by bare-legged men in red and gold turbans, and wearing clothes of gold cloth. Behind them came an elephant with gorgeous trappings, and 12 Arabian horses followed. These horses had gold bracelets about their fore legs just above the knees, and there were great silver bells running from the saddle along the back to the crupper. The saddles were of silver cloth, the stirrups were of silver, and the bride was decorated with gold. Between these horses came the wedding chair, and this was a sort of a litter perhaps six feet square containing a bed with cushions and pillows and over it were laid up on all sides a canopy with red cloth. A cheap cashmere shawl was thrown over its top and I was told that the bride was inside. I asked her age and was told that she had lived just eight years. Behind her came a number of women carrying her dowry upon their heads.

One party bore the bride's bed. It was a neat frame work of wood about 4 feet long and 3 feet wide, and it was covered with 15 inches of the ground, and instead of wire springs there was a net work of cloth-ropes stretched within the framework. Another woman carried a tray with a containing the cooking utensils, consisting of three or four iron pots and a rice jar, and the whole outfit would have been dear at \$10. I talked with the father of the groom. He told me the bride would come and stay two days with her mother-in-law and then go back home until she was 10 years of age, when she would come to live with her husband and be married for good.

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Among the High-Caste Hindoos a sentiment is now growing up against infant marriages, and there is one society, the members of which will not marry their girls before their fourteenth year. It must be remembered, however, that the Hindu women do not marry until they are 12 or 13, and the population of India. India has more Mohammedans than Turkey, and the 333,000,000 of people who make up this Indian population are not all Hindoos. There are Persians who are so noted as merchants are Persian fire worshippers, and they do not marry their children under 12.

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lightful spot in the hills about 100 miles from Bombay, and she will soon begin the construction of her institution. The Hindu wife is in a paradise compared to the Hindu widow. The condition of the life is bad enough. As the slave of her husband she eats after he has through, and she takes what is left. She has no education to speak of and her only hope of salvation is in him. She stands while he sits in the household, and she can not, if she lives in the interior, go to the Ganges and bathe in the sacred water. The Hindu woman worships her husband as a god, and he returns the worship by doing as little as possible for her life.

There are 6,000,000 widows in India, and as the majority of the marriages take place under 10, the greater part of these women become widows as children. A Hindu widow can never marry again, even if her husband dies before the ceremony of marriage. If she does, she is considered a prostitute, and she is branded with a red mark on her forehead. A Hindu widow must give up all the pleasures of this world. She must never wear any jewelry, never sleep on a bed, and for the rest of her life she must live as a mendicant. Her mother-in-law's family. She eats by herself and cooks her own food. The moment her husband dies her ornaments are torn from her. She is clad in the poorest of dress, and she is branded with a red mark on her forehead. A Hindu widow must give up all the pleasures of this world. She must never wear any jewelry, never sleep on a bed, and for the rest of her life she must live as a mendicant. Her mother-in-law's family. She eats by herself and cooks her own food. The moment her husband dies her ornaments are torn from her. She is clad in the poorest of dress, and she is branded with a red mark on her forehead.

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In the northwest provinces of India, where the holiest of the Hindoos live, the treatment of the widows is even worse than that described in the above statements. Here the woman is often dragged along with her husband's corpse to the cremation. She is pushed and pulled and made to stand there while the body is burning. She comes

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Thousands of us die, but more live. I saw a woman, one of my own country.

She had been ill before her husband's death. When he died she was too weak and ill to be dragged to the river. She was in a burning fever, her mouth-in-law called water carrier and had four large skins of water poured over her as she lay on the ground, where she had been thrown from her bed when her husband died. The chill

A Time of Universal Rejoicing, Weddings and Wedding Sermons.

THE OLD-TIME MARRIAGE COVENANT.

(WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.)

Next Thursday, July 4, will be the one hundred and thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, which dissolved all connection between this country and Great Britain, and made the former a free and independent nation. When there spread throughout the 13 colonies the great news that on the Fourth of July, 1776, the Continental Congress, sitting at Philadelphia, had adopted such a declaration, it was everywhere received with demonstrations of delight. News traveled very slowly in those days, so that the people of many places did not observe their first Fourth of July until long after that day had passed, but they celebrated it none the less enthusiastically on that account—with an elaborateness, universality and heartiness to which our more modern observance of the day has long been a stranger.

For several years past there has been a great deal of talk, at each approaching recurrence of our nation's birthday, of reviving the old-time celebrations of the day, and thereby cultivating a sense of patriotism among the people. In view of this, all that pertains to old-time observances of the "Glorious Fourth" in the THE DAYS OF OUR GRANDFATHERS

and great-grandfathers acquires a special interest. So many of the most important events of the Revolutionary War and of the causal occurrences which gave rise to it transpired in New England that for many years after the Declaration of Independence day has been celebrated in that section of the country in a manner which has been the model for other parts of the Union. Among the people of that section the Fourth of July, or "Independence Day," as it was generally called, took the place of other holidays. The millenarianism severely frowned upon, and a large degree of the general justification of Christmas and New Year, not being wholly absorbed by the great religious holidays, the Fourth of July was mingled with the patriotic fervor aroused by Independence Day and found vent in various social festivities, both of a public and private character, and in the most varied description, and the rooms are so small that the beds are put inside the house during the daytime. Still in such houses women spend their whole lives, going out only when it is necessary to draw water. Now and then in the country you see the women of the lowest castes at work, but high-caste women never. The women do the grinding of corn for the family, and corn is ground here just as it was in the days of the Scriptures.

Among the High-Caste Hindoos a sentiment is now growing up against infant marriages, and there is one society, the members of which will not marry their girls before their fourteenth year. It must be remembered, however, that the Hindu women do not marry until they are 12 or 13, and the population of India. India has more Mohammedans than Turkey, and the 333,000,000 of people who make up this Indian population are not all Hindoos. There are Persians who are so noted as merchants are Persian fire worshippers, and they do not marry their children under 12.

The Hard Lot of Child Widows.

Pundita Ramabai, the high caste Hindu woman who has been raising funds in America for the establishment of a college for the child widows of India, has just returned home. She is now at Poona, a de-

lightful spot in the hills about 100 miles from Bombay, and she will soon begin the construction of her institution. The Hindu wife is in a paradise compared to the Hindu widow. The condition of the life is bad enough. As the slave of her husband she eats after he has through, and she takes what is left. She has no education to speak of and her only hope of salvation is in him. She stands while he sits in the household, and she can not, if she lives in the interior, go to the Ganges and bathe in the sacred water. The Hindu woman worships her husband as a god, and he returns the worship by doing as little as possible for her life.

There are 6,000,000 widows in India, and as the majority of the marriages take place under 10, the greater part of these women become widows as children. A Hindu widow can never marry again, even if her husband dies before the ceremony of marriage. If she does, she is considered a prostitute, and she is branded with a red mark on her forehead. A Hindu widow must give up all the pleasures of this world. She must never wear any jewelry, never sleep on a bed, and for the rest of her life she must live as a mendicant. Her mother-in-law's family. She eats by herself and cooks her own food. The moment her husband dies her ornaments are torn from her. She is clad in the poorest of dress, and she is branded with a red mark on her forehead.

Crucially Persecuted Women.

In the northwest provinces of India, where the holiest of the Hindoos live, the treatment of the widows is even worse than that described in the above statements. Here the woman is often dragged along with her husband's corpse to the cremation. She is pushed and pulled and made to stand there while the body is burning. She comes

dressed in cloth of gold and with heavy gold bracelets on his wrists and ankles, sitting in a wedding chair with a little baby girl of not over 2, who lay asleep at the other end of the chair while the procession moved onward. Her sleep was heavy, and she had probably been drugged with opium.

This was a marriage of two wealthy families, and the wedding procession was very grand. At the head of it were two camels with trappings of gold ridden by bare-legged men in red and gold turbans, and wearing clothes of gold cloth. Behind them came an elephant with gorgeous trappings, and 12 Arabian horses followed. These horses had gold bracelets about their fore legs just above the knees, and there were great silver bells running from the saddle along the back to the crupper. The saddles were of silver cloth, the stirrups were of silver, and the bride was decorated with gold. Between these horses came the wedding chair, and this was a sort of a litter perhaps six feet square containing a bed with cushions and pillows and over it were laid up on all sides a canopy with red cloth. A cheap cashmere shawl was thrown over its top and I was told that the bride was inside. I asked her age and was told that she had lived just eight years. Behind her came a number of women carrying her dowry upon their heads.

One party bore the bride's bed. It was a neat frame work of wood about